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Hints and Notes on the life of

NANDANAR.

FIRST EDITION

By

W. Ponnambala Mudaliar,
Retired Salt Sub-Inspector;
Member of the Executive Committee
of the
"**Old Boys**" Association P. H. S. Conjeeveram.

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Correction.

For.	Read.
Page 6. Line 12. Godesses.	Goddesses.
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Hints and Notes on the Life of NANDANAR.

Part I.

Introductory:- Nandanar was born in a Pariah Family called as "Depressed Classes" and ruled out as such by the Government. His date of birth is unknown but he appears to have lived as far back as 2400 years. This is a rough estimation based on his contemporaries who lived. He lived in the parachery of Adanoor, a village in Tanjore District, with all its insanitary surroundings for which "Paracheries" have been universally noted. From the beginning to the end of his life, he lived a pariah only, and with all the humiliation that the pariahs were subjected toby the caste system; and with all the privileges and liberties denied, contrary to other classes who were deemed higher bythe rigid force of that system—not thoroughly extinct even under the present conditions. He, in his boyhood, obtained inspiration of love to God and cultivated it as between mother and baby and decided to translate it into practice, by himself walking several miles and fording rivers and rivulets on the way, and after obtaining permission, at first, with an

exhibition of God's miraculous work made for th sake of his love to Him, from his master, a brahman; [redacted] worshipped God "Nataraja" by name, at Chidambaram who though in the form of an image, yet admitted his soul into His kingdom, when Nandanar bathed into a burning fire and came out of it in life; and worshipped Him.

PART II.

Nandanar finished his career roughly at the age of forty five. He was uneducated as proverbially as his caste-brotheren were. His little folk consisted in doing service to the temples close by which were in need of Pariah's labour, for supplying tans and leather straps to covering and fastening drums, fiddles and other musical instruments. Though he cannot be admitted into the inner parts of the temple, because of his low-caste, still he stood outside it and prayed seeing through the wall-holes made for the image of God to be seen through. Some years passed on in this service and the constant meditation of God and the practice of love to Him continued uninterrupted, until he wished to visit a temple at "Tirupunkoor" some miles away, to his village. He thought that a company of comrades would enhance happiness in the journey. So, at his request, eleven pariahs

accompanied him. He, with these eleven, reached "Tirupunkoor". As customary, he approached the siva temple and looked through the wall-holes in order to pray. But the bull statue, a symbol of "Nandikesvarar" a disciple of God Siva, obstructed the sight of "Lingam" from behind it, because of its hugeness. This was a pathetic incident for Nandanar, because his affection for worshipping God in the idol of lingam was all that he cherished for. His grievances, pure and simple as they were, moved the heart of God Siva, so much that the movement of the bull statue a space off from its fixture was after all a momentous task and Nandanar enabled to see the God Lingam, standing at right angles and pray free of obstruction. Nandanar prayed with uncorrupted blood and brain, and over and over, to an extent that the change that had taken place in the fixture of the bull statue was beyond his conscience. This over, he was returning; and found a pond in a perishing condition, not very far off, from the premises of the temple at Tirupunkoor, and decided to dig and place it in a good order, because of its utility in various ways to the people in general and as a virtue. Naturally a labourer that he was, his idea was not a strange conception to him and for the matter of that, to others as well. But the will and energy was the important factor to be counted and

admired of him, when he wanted to exhibit that virtue in practice. God knew his idea and sent his son "God Ganapathy" to appear before him as a lobourer and offer services for the work Nandanar thought of. Nandanar met him as a man to man and engaged him on wages. The cooly began digging and while the work was going on and all the eleven friends too joining in it, Nandanar became fast asleep in the meditation and it was a few minutes' interval when he woke up and found a tank-in all the sense it was-ready for use. His surprise was great and he realised that it was the work of God himself, because the cooly who began digging was found missing. It is this miracle of God that gave an impetus to several other events that subsequently followed and Nandanar was the author of.

Part III.

Under the circumstances as described above, the thought of visiting another temple especially the one at Chidambaram, because it is not only bigger in size but also famous in its legend as sung by the poets and devotees as well, was schemed out by Nandanar; and he made it known to his eleven friends in particular and other caste

brotheren in general in Adanoor; and asked them to accompany him there too. None of them agreed and they questioned Nandanar as to the usefulness of the "Idol-Worship." Nandanar preached to them, on the advantages that the "Idol-Worship" would bring both to heart and soul. This only made them conclude that Nandanar was a mad man and they wanted to bring him round in some other manner. Nandanar, a man of strong physique, did not yield; and used force upon those who did not obey, in smearing their faces with sacred ashes and in praying to God, uttering the words of "Arahara Siva". This forcible training had not produced the effect for which it was intended by Nandanar. They only wanted to compromise. They pitched upon one among themselves on whom neither suspicion nor joke would fall, because of his old age and large experience. This time-worn man approached Nandanar and questioned him on all fours; and ultimately asked for all the mischievous characters that he stood for; and the discipline of the little folk that he spoiled and killed. Nandanar asked him in the following manner.

"You have grown old; but have your passions and desires declined? You have your spinal chord bent owing to age; but have your anger ceased?"; and soon the old man, unable to answer, compromised with Nandanar who rubbed his face with

sacred ashes. The moment it was done, the old man took to a turn of mind and went asleep on the meditation of God. A few minutes after, he awoke, praised Nandanar for giving him consolation of mind; and returned home, only to inform his brotheren who sent him, that his efforts had proved unsuccessfull. Then the whole village rose up as one for joint action against Nandanar who they judged that it was sheer madness that he was sickened after, and that it was because, for a longer time than usual, their house-hold gods, tree-Gods, Godesses, watchmen-gods, highway-robber-Gods, Dumb-gods and others,—all 34 in number-were forgotten for worship. Neither were they invited to a feast on any one year, nor were they thought of in daily prayers This was a great blur and should be remedied atonce for the sake of Nandanar.

Part IV.

Preparations for a grand feast in which each to take part, were soon on the full swing Announced it was, that the worship of their favourite gods was the concern of one and all; and in pleasing themselves they would please their Gods; and the Gods so pleased, would grant the boon they asked for All that they wanted, was that the

change of mentality which Nandanar possessed, would disappear. Fouls, sheep and pigs, too numerous to mention, were killed, their meat cooked and placed in front of the idols. Dance of various kinds took place in which the drinking of liquor was indulged, each asking of the Gods to grant the boon, viz , removal of insanity to Nandanar Songs were sung, invoking the blessings of several Gods whom they worshipped, each in his own way and taste, upon Nandanar. But lo? the scene after all ended in a disaster. Nandanar got too much irritated for all these beastly and cowardly actions on their part, beat, and tortured them, until each of them fled for life and uttered the name of " Arahara Siva ".

PART V.

The preaching of Nandanar continued with a physical force which he applied to his caste brotheren whenever they violated the discipline in the recitation of words "Arahara siva Ambalavana, Thillai Ambala Desikanatha". It was a prayer-school which he held to them and in which the rules of sanitation and prayers, both in the morning and evening by the students, either bigger or small, were taught and strictly enforced,

because Nandanar was endowed with a physical strength better than any of his caste brotheren. It is a natural qualification which the Providence had rightly chosen to endow him with, in order to suit to the exigencies among the people in gnneral, and the pariah sects in particular; and to become an ideal teacher. All the stndents implored Nandanar to let them recite and pray under the roof of a house rather than, in the open air; and that he need not go to Chidambaram, lest he would incur the displeasure of the brahman-master who was their master to all intents and purposes; and to enforce the village discipline as well. Nandanar said that he would go to Chidamabram at any cost, but that they need not follow him, a concession which they long urged for. The eleven pariahs who once before accompanied Nandanar to Tirupunkoor were, as enumerated below:—

1. Aravan. 2 Thonthi (Huge belly) 3. Anai-eri (Elephant rider) 4. Muthumari, 5 Kalanikathan (field watcher,) 6. Pachaluran (Irrigator) 7. Andisevagan (Peon) 8. Sorian (itchy) 9. Varian (mad) 10 Kanian (Field supervisor) 11. Ellaichutti (patrol Inspector):-all these 11 men secretly held a meeting and marched on unnoticed and reported the matter to the Brahman-master, in whom they had confidence They did not bear the strain that Nandanar had imposed on them. The

representation though couched in a mildway, also suggested remedy in order to put down the arrogance of Nandanar. The brahman-master answered the representation as follows:— "This morning, Nandanar came and wished me; and his behaviour was all meant for me to suppose that it was a trick, pure and simple; and that he displayed it in that fashion which however he believed that I (the brahman-master) did not detect of him. Remember all of you; I will not grant him permission to go to Chidambaram." They then returned home fully satisfied with the success of the interview Nandanar, ignorant of the inter view appeared before the brahman-master and put forth his grievances and prayed him for granting permission to go to Chidambaram, to worship the God there. His grounds of appeal against his low caste which prohibited him the temple-entry were as:— "The God at Chidambaram is a standing personality to combination and equality, of one and all, without distinction of caste and creed. That God, I want to see Please give me permsission." This request vouchsafed, as it were, shows that Nandanar only wished his brahman master to be convinced that God made no difference between man and man and between a brahman and a pariah. He asked for leave, whether casual or privilege, just

as a servant would, of his master, to go to Chidambaram The purpose of journey was, he asserted, that he loved the God within it and all other interesting features within the temple and the town alike. Really Nandanar should have thought of his own position as safe as a king who had conquered an enemy and his country He knew that his adventure to Chidambaram would be met with greater success than he had at Tirupunkoor. It is re-cast as follows :— First The movement of the bull-statue from its fixture. Second The formation of a tank at Tirupunkoor as Nandanar wished The above are the two incidents that strengthened Nandanar's soul for further success which he might have thought of This is the result of the mental exertion which Nandanar made on the conception of the "Divine-Theory". Be it what it was–whether Temple-Worship or Idol-Worship:–it was all the same if the concentration of mind on God had been practised Why? " Practised " because it was a Psychologic and mental energy of Nandanar in order to achieve an object

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Part VI.

Nandanar at all costs wanted to obtain permission or consent from his brahman master

to whom he owed his faithful duties as a servant. But the master withstood all his entreaties and devotion to God It was a fight on discussion over religious topics, rules of caste and prohibition of temple-entry, as to the power of master over slaves; an assertion that the birth of one in a pariah family was itself a prohibition to think of or pray to, or to be admitted in to the kingdom of "God;" and last of all, a sentence that he must die to be reborn in a higher caste to attain that salvation which the higher castes alone are entitled to All these have been sung in a pathetic style and in a exaggerated manner and acted as a drama. Nandanar did not cease, even when told and entreated by his master who drew his attention to the greatest care he was bound to take for the cultivation of the land of which he (the brahman master) owned in forty "valees" which are equal to 264. 5 acres. He also said th t his prosperity lay on Nandanar's faithful duty and that his absence, all of a sudden, from the cultivation-business, would entail him to a terrible loss. Even then Nandanar did not compromise. Disgusted with him the brahman master told Nandanar to clear out of his sight, granting him no permission. Nandanar returned home and prayed in mind, i e, "Manasa Puja," the object of his going to Chidambaram for the time being a thwarted Some time after, he

appeared again and asked for permission, only to be refused and reproached. He made several visits in succession, until the period which amounted to ten years proved all in vain.

PART VII.

As many times as Nandanar sought for permission, so many times his brahman master refused it and reprimanded him partly by way of joke and partly by way of threat, because he was not such a fool as to have thought of refusal, in case of worshipping God, or any God, or the one at Chidambaram, which, as a matter of fact, he knew, was common to one and all.

But he wanted to see to what extent his power as master had served on Nandanar or whether it was honoured in the breach rather than in the observance; the position which both of them held being the same as between a land-lord and a tenant, with a mutual understanding or agreement, whether written or oral, in order to cnltivate the lands and pay rent, either in the shape of coins or grains. as the case may be. How he ignored the fact that Nandanar visited the God at Tirupunkur without his permission, and Why he applied so much force as when Nandanar sought

for it in order to go to Chidambaram, and why Nandanar too should have reported to his master in order to get permission to go, once, twice or several times, amounting to ten years:- these are the facts that baffle the mind of the reader who is led to conclude that both the master and the servant understood their position so well that the master wanted to extract a possibility out of an impossibility while the servant was sure to make an exhibition of it so far as the spiritualism in the evolution of, "D i v i n e T h e o r y" was concerned. In order to arrive at this conclusion, the glaring instances that occured at Tirupunkur must be remembered It cannot be said that the master wilfully criticised and abused the low caste of which Nandanar was born, when the question of worship was deeply considered. But it can be gathered that he wanted to understand the truth of the character which had strangely sprung of Nandanar out of all proportion to its value. Nandanar unceasingly pressing him for permission, the master thought out a plan which in all ways would serve a stumbling block to Nandanar to give up the idea of visiting Chidambaram.; and to find out whether it would not be possible for another divine miracle to be evolved out, similar to those at Tirupunkoor,. of which he was not ignorant He therefore issued a condition,

precedent to the grant of permission which Nandanar had so long avowed. That is:- The forty "valees" of his uncultivated paddy fields should be irrigated and ploughed, seeds thrown, young plants transplanted, growth watched and the produce harvested for measurement and c nsumption. This work done, the permission sought for would be granted. In this condition, such as it was, it was evident that he wanted to delay the grant of request sufficiently a long time to come, in case a miracle which he certainly thought of be not possible of solution by Nandanar who patiently took it to his brain and lightly too, because he was confident that he would succeed in it in one form or the other as at Tirupunkoor. He sat upon meditation, the mentality of which cannot be describ:d. But it can be solved into saying that he must have wept, in thinking of God, just as a baby would, to seek its mother. God appeared ir his dreams and said that the condition imposed on him had been fulfilled in practice and wished Nandanar to take his master and show him the lands which were all in harvesting condition. Nandanar woke up and for a few hours to come, did not believe himself. He however took a walk to the fields and there to his astonishment, the whole area was one sea of paddygrowth, either withering or not withering, but ready to be

harvested. He then, fully convinced of thorough success which all his labours devoted mentally to loving God had been attended with, returned and humbly requesed his master to proceed and take a view of his lands in respect of which he issued the condition. The master of course did not believe Nandanar at first but on being pressed again aud again, walked to the fields and saw them all fit for harvesting. His astonishment was so great that he immediately took Nandanar as his spiritual lord, openly declared him so, and even asked him to reveal the precept which he recited and which, as a result of it, led him to the accomplishment of such amazing features as those he witnessed.

PART VIII.

The Brahman master then treating Nandanar as his spiritual guru (Lord) repented and begged of Nandanar to pardon him for all that he abused him with. Nandanar humbly replied that he was but a servant and that the miracle was the "God's work" to which he owed all his past mental labour. The Brahman, however, did not leave him without pressing for communication of that precept which paved the way for him to enter the

kingdom and grace of "God." Nandanar taught him all the process that is required for concentrating mind on the conception of "God" and concluded that it was all love, pure and simple, just as it was between a husband and a wife, or between a bridegroom and a bride and that the continued practice of that mental love which he so practised, ended and would end, in success in the way in which each treated and would treat of the other, and vice- versa. This secret revealed, the Brahman gladly permitted him to go to Chidambaram, asking him for pardon again for all his mischievous conduct. Nandanar yet bowed to the Brahman and standing aloof, begged of him to bless him with, on the success of his future adventure. N a n d a n a r put questions to the Brahman-Master in the following manner who answered all of them in the affirmative.

Nandanar's queries.	Answers .
1. Can I get into the presence of God at Chidambaram?	Yes.
2. Can I get imumnity for re-birth?	Yes.
3. What can I do for my ignorance , to understand the way to	

salvation? You win-...

4. Will God shew me His Grace? Yes

5. Am not I of a low caste? No: You are not.

6 Is not it contrary to the custom and Vedic principles No. It is rather in accordance to it

7. Are you sure that I will be admitted into the "kingdom of God" which is named "Nataraja"? You will be admitted

8. Will I get celestial happiness? Certainly you will.

Nandanar's journey was a joyful one and vhen he forded the Coleroon by boat, he was able o see the tower of the Chidambaram temple. His eart and soul still more got excited, seeing at it; nd admiring the existance of several gardens nd fields on his way, reached Chidambaram, dmired, and worshipped the temple structure, und all the physical features both, in the town and surroundings alike; and heard the sound of the striking temple-bell; and consoled himself; and walked through the streets, and at last arrived at the temple-premises. His excess of love to God did not however induce him to make an entry to the

..., because his courage in doing that, was still latent in the consciousness of his caste-customary-observances which among others disallowed him to make a temple-entry. However he unceasingly prayed and circumambulated the temple-buildings and the townlimits His meditations and prayers were done both day and night and at one night, God appeared to him in dreams and said as follows:—"Our deciples will be ushered unto your presence and in accordance to their wishes, you will bathe in the burning fire which will be made, out of match-wood; then be able to recite precepts just as they; and then accompany them to the temple; and at last, unto my presence." While Nandanar dreamt in the above words, His deciples, the residents, dreamt the vision of God to say as follows:— "Invite Nandanar whom it is not impossible to detect, because he is worshipping, weeping and dancing in the open air; and because being a Pariah, he cannot enter the temple" Then the deciples "Dikshit" as they were called searched for Nandanar and found him out. Then communication passed face to face, the deciples at last imposing a condition as: "Nandanar" will be admitted into their community in general and for the temple entry in particular; provided that he wished to be bathed in a burning fire; and that he would come out of it back in life.

Nandanar took this decree in a joyful spi
performance having proved a thorough succes
the deciples admitted Nandanar into their community and then into the inner temple. Nandanar then prayed face to face to the image of God "NATARAJA" and disappeared, in body and soul together, into that land from which no traveller returned.

(End.)

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This book can be had of

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